

Dear Judge,

I wish I knew your name as I would address you as such. I will try to direct this letter as if I already know you and your background, education, and morale, capturing all that you have accomplished as I critique myself to address you properly. Let me begin.

My name is Kalynn Hawkins and I am the step-daughter of Benjamin Bradley. I am moved to write this letter to you today to hopefully inform you of my perspectives of my step-father and the type of man he was, is, and is destined to become. I hope that this letter, if does nothing else, gives you a bird's eye perspective of the type of husband and father he was to our family when we were blessed enough to experience it. I also hope that this letter, if nothing more, allows you to see Benjamin Bradley as an upstanding citizen, that though made mistakes, still deserves a second chance of freedom. Though I know that the power of that decision is based on many leaflets, I still write in hopes that something will be impacted by this.

All of my life I have attended prestigious schools to further my education. Those schools were highly ranked in academia, creative expression, and drive, as they propelled their students forward. I attended Cass Technical High School where I studied in Business Services & Technology and The University of Michigan where I majored in Psychology and minored in Writing. Throughout the vast decisions I made on what schools to attend, my step-father was there, alongside my mother every step of the way helping me make those decisions. He too went to Cass Tech and was studying at the University of Michigan, in Dearborn. These steps he took inspired me to grab my education by the horns and see long-term impact for what then seemed like small decisions. He also helped fund my educational costs (books, organizations, student-life) while I attended and helped my siblings out as well. My three younger siblings were made to stay in a charter school throughout their education and too were able to be supported by our parents. I and my younger siblings always stayed in extra-curricular activities to broaden our perspectives with people, environments, and communities. My step-dad helped us in these transitions.

Let me back up. My mother met my step father while working in the Detroit Medical Center and they soon married. Closely after my brother Ben Jr. was born and Braelyn followed shortly after. During this time, I for the first time was able to have a consistent father figure in my life, as my biological father had too been incarcerated for many years and wasn't a constant presence. I was able to have someone who would treat my mother with respect and show me what a husband and father looked like. I looked up to Benjamin and eventually got comfortable enough to call him dad. I think that that impact he had on me and my mother molded our family into a tighter unit. We were able to trust one another more because he had to learn to trust someone so new. He always asked my perspective in family matters and trips, and made my voice feel heard whenever it needed. I feel that this alone inspired me to always try harder and push myself more, because I saw him doing it everyday even as more children were added to the family.

When my step-dad was picked up, it was a big shock to us all. I at the time was living in Texas teaching in the Rio Grande Valley through Teach For America and wasn't able to be there to support my mom and family. I had to hear about everything via phone after it had happened. This impacted not only myself but my siblings as well. When I go home to visit now, I see how different things are because our father isn't home, and I and my mother are constantly questioned about when he is coming back which we can give no answer to.

My step-father is not a dangerous man. He is quite the opposite. He has a big personality and is very observant and listens intently. He also tried his hardest to be supportive and take care of his family. I think that my step-father deserves a second chance at freedom. I know that we can pick up the pieces as a family and start things in a more uplifting direction. I am not writing this letter asking or seeking forgiveness for the things documents say my father has done. I am simply letting my voice be heard as I have been silent during this entire process. Please read this letter and let it settle with any decisions you have to make. Even if nothing changes, just please see my father as an upstanding citizen that, like many of us, made mistakes. It is time for him to turn things around with another chance at making his own story, recreating himself to get back to being the man and father we as a family need.

-Kalynn Hawkins